THE JEWS OF CHINA.

IT is well known that Jews have been resident in China in considerable numbers[1] from a very remote period,[2] as Kohler[3] has shown from evidences of their peculiar rites preserved in connection with their synagogue. Brief notices of their existence have come from time to time before the European public.[4] It is even ascertained that some of them[5] attained an honorable rank in literature and several became ministers of provinces.[6] It seems to me that the most authentic evidence that has been left us of this class of honorable men existing among the Israelites in China is a note at the end of the first section of the law,[7] as found in the synagogue at Kae-fung, a transcript of which was sent to Europe by the Jesuit missionaries, containing the following statement: "Our master, our rabbi, R. Jacob, son of

[1] *Chinese Repository,* Vol. I, 1832, p. 8.

[2] *China, Its History, Art and Literature,* Vol. X, p. 146. "They were supposed to enter the middle kingdom about 200 B. C., during the Han dynasty, and afterward brought the Pentateuch with them from the Babylonian captivity and established themselves at Hanan in 72 A. D."

Abu-Zeyd Al-Hassan, an Arab who claims to have learned from his fellow countrymen who wrote in China in the twelfth century, states "that a massacre took place at Khan-fou in the year 878 and that 120,000 Mohammedans, Jews and Christians were killed." *Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine,* Tome I, p. 64.

[3] *Jewish Encyc.,* Vol. IV, p. 33, col. 2.

[4] Missionary notices found in Chinese Repositories. See also *Jewish Encyc.,* art. "China."

[5] *Chinese Repository,* Vol. XIII, 1844, p. 468.

[6] *Mih-chwang-mwán lŭh,* Book IV, p. 2.

[7] This section, with a great many others, was brought to Shanghai by the two messengers of the London society who visited the colony of Kae-fung-foo in 1851. The whole are now deposited in charge of the Society for Propagation of Christianity among the Jews, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

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Abishai, the son of R. Eldad the (Saupher) scribe and (Melammed) teacher, finished this."[8] The date of this is about 1620. In a register of the Hebrew residents at Kaefung-foo, which was brought to Shanghai in July, 1851, and probably dates from some time in the seventeenth century, there are several mentioned as holding this office. On the first page we find: "Rabbi Jeremiah, the (Saupher) scribe, teacher, Sheloh, the son of Rabbi Akiba, the teacher, Sheloh."

In the records of the Kaon family we find: "Ezekiel; Samuel; Rabbi Issachar, Joseph, sons of Rabbi Mordecai the (Saupher) scribe; Joshua, Shalman, Rabbi Mordecai the (Saupher) scribe, son of Simeon." In the Lee family are cited: "Rabbi Reuben the (Saupher) scribe, son of Eliezer, Rabbi Ezekiel the (Saupher) scribe, son of Rabbi Shelephidem.

Interesting as such incidental notices are, they are far too meagre to satisfy the inquiring mind; and we cannot but regret the absence of fuller details, which would prove acceptable to ethnologists, to historians and to those who delight in tracing out the fortunes of the chosen people of God in the various lands of their expatriation. It seems to me however that further light can be thrown upon the existence of the Jews in China by examining some of the books dealing with travel, as well as Chinese literature itself.

Six hundred and thirty-six years before our era, or seventy years after the Jews had been driven from their land, King Cyrus published an edict throughout his empire, which included "All the kingdoms of the earth," calling the most eminent Jews that were in Babylonia; and he said to them:[9]

[8] Finn's *Jews in China*, p. 37. The original Hebrew of this note, with Latin and French translations, is given in the Prolegomena to Bagster's Polyglott Bible, p. 17.

[9] Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chap. I, par. 1.

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"I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country as please, to return to their own country and to build there the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it had been before."

But a number, as is now known, remained in the Land[10] of the East, and doubtless many of them found their way into China.

Benjamin of Tudela visited eastern countries for the purpose of ascertaining the situation of the dispersed tribes. He however mentions only China.[11]

From some incidental remarks in Marco Polo's[12] travels we learn that the Jews were sufficiently numerous about this time to assert a political influence in China and Tartary. Speaking of the defeat in 1286 by Kubla Khan of the Tartar prince Nayan who had a vast number of Christians in his army, he continues: "When the Jews and Saracens perceived that the banner of the cross was overthrown they taunted the Christian inhabitants with it, saying: "Behold the state to which your (vaunted) banners and those who follow them are reduced." In the following chapter, speaking of the rites with which Kubla honored the Christian festivals at Kanbalu (Peking), he adds: "And he observed the same at the festivals of the Saracens, Jews and idolaters." Upon being asked his motive for this conduct, he said: "There are four great prophets who are reverenced and worshiped by different classes of mankind; the Christians regard Jesus Christ as their divinity; the Saracens, Mahomet; the Jews, Moses; and the Idolaters, Sogomonbarkan." Towards the end of the same dynasty we find another record, this time by Ibn Batuta,[13]

[10] Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chap. I, par. 3.

[11] Asher's edition of Benjamin of Tudela's *Itinerary*, Vol. I, p. 94, Hebrew text, or Vol. I, p. 143 of the English text. Asher, Vol. II, p. 189, remarks: "Our author however is the first European who mentions China.

[12] Marsden's translation, edited by Thomas Wright, London, 1854, p. 166.

[13] *Travels of Ibn Batuta*, Lee's translation, p. 217.

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the Arabian envoy, as to the existence of the Jews in China about the year 1346. In an account of the city of Khansa (Hang-chow) he remarks: "In the second division are the Jews, Christians and the Turks who worship the Sun; these are numerous, their number is not known, and theirs is the most beautiful city."

We have an allusion to the Jews in China about this time from Galeotta Perera, an Italian gentleman, who was for many years a prisoner in that country. Speaking of the administration of justice there he says: "The Moores, Gentiles and Jews have their sundry othes. The Moores do sweare by their Mossasos, the Brachmans by their Fili; the rest likewise by the things they do worship." A native encyclopedia written at this time speaks of eight different systems of astronomy taught at various times in China, the last named being called the "Four Heavens," a theory introduced by the "Heen foreigners."[14]

Manasseh believed that part of the ten tribes crossed the great wall which divided China from Tartary and settled in the former country. He even stated that he believed that there were direct references in scripture to the migration of the Jews into China.

Basnage however states it can clearly be shown that neither the Tartars nor the Chinese are descendants from the ten tribes. He states however that the ten tribes did enter India and China and that the Jews were acquainted with these countries in Solomon's time.

Peritsol, an Italian Jew who lived two centuries ago, stated that the Jews were once powerful in China and India. He tells us that "They neither dwell in houses, till the ground nor drink wine." He also tells us how to get there.

Renandot, writing about this period, refers to the Jews

[14] *San-tsae-t'oo-hwúy*, astronomical section, p. 2.

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of China as follows: "They thrive by various means, many of them cultivate the sciences, particularly philosophy, astronomy and physics."

Then came the various Roman and English missionary societies which at first brought us little and then a great deal of information about the Jews. From which information we can conclude that there must have once existed a great number of Jews in China and that they once had a great literature.[15]

Ever since 1851, when the London Society for Propagation of Christianity among the Jews sent its two representatives to Kae-fung-foo in Hanan to find out more about the Jews in that district, it has been a mooted question whether or not there are any references to the Jews in Chinese literature. There is no doubt that from the above foreign references we may conjecture that the Jews have been residents in China for a great length of time. Let us now see if we can possibly find Jewish records in China which bear out the above conclusions.

According to the testimony of one of the stone tablets in the synagogue of Kae-fung-foo the Jews first entered China during the Han dynasty,[16] and we are also told in letters of missionaries that "they came during the reign of Ming-te (A. D. 58-75) from Se-Yih, that is, 'the western regions.' "[17] It seems from what can be gathered that this western country can be none other than Persia, and that they came by the way of Khorasan and Samarcand.

There is no doubt that the Jews must have greatly increased in numbers, for I find in one place that in the year 845 Emperor Woo-tsung issued an edict and ordered the suppression of the Heen worshipers.[18]

[15] *Chinese Repository,* Vol. I, 1832, p. 8.

[16] *Chinese Repository,* Vol. XX, p. 454.

[17] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses,* Tome XXIV, p. 62.

[18] I shall try to prove that the Heen and the Jews were one and the same people. Consult *Se-ké ts'ung-yù,* Book I, p. 19.

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In the years 956 and 958 we find that the local authorities at Kae-fung-foo conferred honors upon the Jews.[19]

The next information we get about the Jews is from the tablets in the synagogues, which tell about an immigration of seventy families with tribute of western cloth.[20] The statement is attributed to the Emperor Heaon-tsung of the Sung dynasty, that "since they have come to our central land and reverently observe the customs of their ancestors, let them hand down their doctrines at Peen-leang (Kae-fung)." In 1163 the erection of a synogogue was begun at the expense of Yen-too-la, and was finished two years later while Lie Ching and Woo-sze-to were the religious heads."[21]

This may be looked upon as further corroboration of the statement above, that the Jews passed through a season of reverses and only through a special act of the imperial clemency were they allowed once more to build houses of worship.

The next reference that I find concerning the synagogue is in the latter half of the fourteenth century during the Ming dynasty when the synagogue was repaired.[22]

In 1421 the building was again repaired under the direct patronage of the emperor, and an imperial tablet of the Ming dynasty was placed in the hall of the synagogue and a royal commissioner was sent there to burn incense.[23] In 1445, owing to the fact that the front portion of the building was dilapidated, the synagogue was rebuilt, but a great flood which took place in 1461, due to the overflowing of the beds of the Yellow river, almost resulted in the de-

[19] *Mih-chwang-mwán lŭh*, Book IV, p. 2.

[20] Professor Hirth of Columbia University has suggested to me that this might be cotton, inasmuch as this fabric was introduced into China several centuries later.

[21] *Chinese Repository*, Vol. XX, pp. 454-457.

[22] *Chinese Repository*, Vol. XX, p. 457.

[23] It had also been customary for Gentiles to bestow gifts upon the Temple in Jerusalem. Cf. Schürer's *The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Vol. I, p. 304.

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struction of the whole building. It was soon however rebuilt by the imperial permission and an additional portion was annexed in the latter half of the fifteenth century. We can well assume that there were various Jewish settlements in different parts of China, in view of the fact that the Jews of Kae-fung-foo were able to obtain rolls of the Law from Ning-hea and Ning-po instead of those destroyed by the flood. There were also Jewish colonies at Hang-chow and Peking.[24] In 1489 the building was entirely renovated and another stone was erected in commemoration of this event.

We find another tablet within the remains of the temple enclosure, dated 1512, on which is given a general outline of the religious views. At the close of the sixteenth century it is recorded that they were again deprived of their books by a fire and that they bought a roll of the Law from a Mohammedan at Ning-keang-chow in Shen-se[25] who had received it from a dying Jew in Canton. From this they made several copies. The synagogue was rebuilt by one named Chaou.

As to the fortunes of the Jews from that day to this one can find sufficient material in the records of the London Society for the Propagation of Christianity Among the Jews, the *Jewish Quarterly Review*[25a] and the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*.[26]

After examining the sources that the Jews have left us, let us now examine the Chinese literature and see what this

[24] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, Tome XXIV, p. 62.

[25] This Mohammedan may in reality represent several, inasmuch as Father Trigault, in his account of the Christian missions to China, published in the beginning of the seventeenth century, states that during his time both Mohammedans and Jews were known under the general names of Hwuy-Kwuy. I have also found that the Jews and Mohammedans were also called Hwuy-tsze, and that the word for "temple" and "mosque" was the same, namely, Tsing-Chin sze (Temple of Purity). See *Chinese Repository*, Vol. XX, p. 154. Gozani, who visited China in 1704, calls the synagogue "Le-pae sze," a word which was similarly used to designate a mosque.

[25a] *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vols. VIII, X, and XIII.

[26] *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. IV, p. 33.

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neglected field contains for us on this subject. We find that during the Middle Ages the annals of China contain the mention of several foreign sects[27] by name, among which are Muh-hoo, Ta-tsin, King-keaon, Mo-ne, Mŏ-ne, Po-sze-king-keaon, Ho-shin, Heen-keaon, Teen-shin, Hoo-t'een-shin, Hoo-heen, Ho-heen, etc. Some of these sects received the name from their founder, as for instance Muh-hoo Mohammedans; some are designated according to their nationality, as for instance Ta-tsin, the Syrians; others are named from the object which they worship, such as the Heen-keaon or worshipers of Heaven.

Let us now briefly attempt to ascertain the meaning of Heen-Keaow or Heen religion, and perhaps we shall be able to find a few further references about the Jews in China. Peih-Huen, the editor of Chang-gan-che,[28] says, with regard to this sect: "I find these are the same as the (T'een) Heaven worshipers spoken of in the history of the northern Wei dynasty. But in ancient times there was no such character as Heen."[29] I have been told that there are no references to be found in the most ancient dictionaries for the character Heen, but that the earliest source containing a reference to it is the *Yuh-Peen.*[30] The character Heen is here designated as a foreign spirit. The *Kwang-yun*, of later date, gives, "a foreign spirit." In the "catalogue of official grades" there is one styled the Heen chief, pronunciation, "Hyen." The *Tseih-yun,* a work of the Sung dynasty, gives, "pronunciation, T'een; the same sound as Heen." The Yun-hwuy, a subsequent work, gives, "pronunciation, Hyen; the same sound as Heuen."

The *Luh-shoo-tung*, published during the fourteenth century, says: "In Kwan-chung (Shen-se) Hewen is called Heen. Foreigners designate Deity by the word Heen."

[27] Alexander Wylie, *Chinese and Japanese,* Vol. I, 1863.
[28] Printed in 1787. [29] Book IX, p. 4.
[30] Published by Koo Yay-wang in 523.

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The *Hung-woo-ching-yun*, about the end of the fourteenth century, gives: "A foreign spirit. The character is formed from the radical Teen (Heaven). In the Catalogue of the Tang officials there is one called the Heen chief."

The *Chung-yun-hwuy-peen,* which is a re-arrangement of the materials of the preceding, with modifications, published at the beginning of the seventeenth century, says: "This rhymes with Seen, Heen. The character is formed from the radical T'een (Heaven)."

The *Ching-tsze-tung,* published about the middle of the seventeenth century, gives, "Pronunciation, Hyen, same sound as Heen. The name of a foreign spirit. In the Catalogue of the Tang officials there is the Heen chief." The *Kang-he-tsze-teen,* published under the direction of the second emperor of the present dynasty, merely contains a summary of the preceding notes.

A new edition of the *Shwo-wan*, *Shwo-wan keae-tsze tung-shih,* gives the elements "she" (spiritual influence), and "Teen" (Heaven). The pronunciation is Heen.[81]

The Heen are also named in the *Chung-yen-sze-pae,* or "Tablet of the Chung-yen Monastery," by Shoo Yuen-ye in the first part of the ninth century. Among the various foreigners who arrived were the Syrians and the Heen worshipers.

From the above lexicographical details we conclude that Heen is the pronunciation given to the word Teen

[81] *Chinese and Japanese Repository,* Vol. I, 1863, p. 14, addition to note 8. Several dictionaries testify to the fact that an imperial officer was appointed to take charge of the office of burning incense. Yaou-Kwan, in respect to the above, says: "In a catalogue of the imperial officers I have seen one called Heen chief. When the followers of the Heen religion first arrived they were received as followers, according to the custom of the Guest Reception Hotel (Hung-loo she). As a result of this the members of this religion were subject to the authority of a tribunal. It is probable that these people arrived at the beginning of the T'ang dynasty. See Book I, p. 18. The Arabs also were compelled to have a tribunal over them, like the Jews—which is another point of similarity between these two peoples. *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine,* translated by M. Reinaud, Paris, Tome I, p. 13.

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(Heaven) in the province of Shen-se; that this same Heen was the generic word for Deity among western foreigners; that a foreign sect in China worshiped the being designated as Heen; and that an officer of the Tang dynasty was originally supervisor of these sects. We thus see, from the above remarks, that Heen is of recent formation, and I am told that it cannot be found in any book earlier than the sixth century, especially as we have the authority of Peih-Yuen, as we have noticed, that the words Heen and Teen were regarded as synonymous by a foreign sect. In opposition to the view stated above we have that of Yaow-Kwan[82] who traces this religion to the seventh century B. C. His chief authority is a statement taken from Too Yu's commentary on the Tso-chuen[83] which is an amplification of the Confucius history, *Ch'un-ts-ew* ("Spring and Autumn Annals").[84] The text of the *Ch'un-ts-ew* says: "In the nineteenth year of Duke He (B. C. 631) in summer, on the forty-sixth day of the cycle, the men of Choo took the Viscount Tsang and offered him in sacrifice." The *Tso Chuen* says, regarding this: "In summer the Duke of Sung caused W'an, the Duke of Cho, to offer up the Viscount Tsang on the tutelary altar by the river Suy with a desire to conciliate the eastern foreigners." The commentary on this, quoted by Yaou-K'wan, reads: "The Suy receives the Peen, and passing Chin to the east, leaving Leang-tseaow and Pang-ching, it flows into the Sze. Near this water a Heen spirit ruled, which it was the general practice to serve with tutelary worship; hence human beings were slain and offered in sacrifice." This is such a different and grossly exaggerated interpretation, and one which has doubtless

[82] In the *Se-ke ts'ung-yu*, a collection of notes critical and historical, written about the middle of the twelfth century, Book I, p. 18.

[83] This was written by Tso Kew-ming, a disciple of Confucius, and is a record of contemporary events necessary to throw light on the original chronicle.

[84] This is a history of Joo, the native state of Confucius, being the only complete work written by the sage.

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been interpolated by some later hand, that it would hardly be of any use to consider it were it not for the fact that it was reproduced without comment in a modern native geography, *Hae-kwo-t'oo-che*.[35] We are glad, however, to note that the above reading is not supported by any authority. One scholar even denies the above statement.

In *Gae jch-ts-ung-ch-aou*[36] we find the following: Too Yu, in his commentary on the *Tso-chuen,* says, regarding the passage on the tutelary altar by the river Suy: "There was a Heen place of worship upon the Suy river. That is impossible, how could there be a Heen place of worship in China in the time of Duke Seang of Sung?"

Another interesting reference to the Heen places of worship is found in the *Mih-chwang-mwán lŭh,*[37] published about the twelfth century. We read there that "on the north side of the city wall of the eastern capital (Kaefung) there is a Heen place of worship. The Heen Spirit originally came from the western regions. They came here with a band of Mohammedans. The Heen worshipers greatly revere this spirit and pay great homage to him. The minister of the temple is called She, with postnomen She-Chwang. His office was hereditary[38] for a great many generations from the time of the Tang dynasty the Heen religion was pr⁄ alent in Peen and there religious teachers have succeeded one another for over two hundred years.[39]

We find that there were several other places of worship of the Heen religion in Chang-gan-che, but they do not tell us the date of their founding. The quotation in question

[35] Commissioner Lin, famous through the first war of China, collected this material from foreign sources. Wee Yuen, however, a bitter enemy of all foreigners although a great scholar, was the editor of this work. This masterpiece is, however, marred by the onesided view of its editor.

[36] This is a miscellaneous work written by Ye about the end of the Sung dynasty and said to contain a number of interesting historical data.

[37] Book IV, p. 2.

[38] There are doubtless descendants from the house of Aaron, proof of which will form the subject matter of another paper.

[39] Book IV, p. 2.

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reads as follows: "On the west side of the south street dividing the Tsing-kung square is a Heen place of worship."[40] We may also note another quotation, "To the south of the Western gate of Le-tseuen square[41] is a Heen place of worship." One acquainted with the Bible and post-biblical literature will at once remember that the Jews were fond of designating their God by various phenomena. One of the most prominent designations that one finds as an appellation of Jehovah is Heaven, or, by metonymy, God of Heaven. The following examples from the Bible and the Talmud[42] might well prove my contention that the Heen religion is none other than the Jewish religion:

"And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee after that thou shalt have known that the Heavens do rule."[43]

"Fear of Heaven."[44]

"The time of the Malkuth of Heaven is come, that it should be revealed."[45]

We may further strengthen our argument by noting that Tseang-Yung-che, the elder of the two agents of the London Society who visited the synagogue at Kae-fung (in 1851), in giving his report, says that at the present day, "In addressing God in the Chinese language they use the word T'een." There is also evidence that the worshipers of the Jewish religion who came to Shanghai and Peking also designated their God by a similar name. Gozani also relates that they worship their God under the name of T'een.[46] A memoir on the Jews of China gives the following information: "In translating the name of

[40] Book IX, p. 4.

[41] Book X, p. 6.

[42] See rabbinical dictionaries s. v. שָׁמַיִם; also Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 171.

[43] Dan. iv. 26.

[44] Aboth 1-3. See also A. Z. 18a, Hullin 7b, Gen. R. LXXIX, 6.

[45] *Pesikta*, Ed. Buber, p. 51a.

[46] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, Tome XVIII, p. 36.

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Jehovah into Chinese they do not say T'een-choo like the missionaries, but simply T'een, just as the scholars of China do when they explain their term Shang-te.[47]

A still further proof that the Heen and Jewish religion are identical can be gained from the Lieutenant Governor of Fuh-Keen, Seu-Ke-yu, who in his geography of foreign countries remarks:[48] "From Judea westward the nations all worship the T'een (Heaven) spirit. The worship originated with Moses, about the time of the commencement of the Shang dynasty. It is said that the T'een spirit descended on Mount Sinai and gave ten commandments for the guidance of mankind, whence originated the appointment of the seventh day for rest and worship, being a thousand and several hundred years before the birth of Christ. This then is the source whence the Roman Catholic religion took its rise, but it is not identical with the Roman Catholic religion. From the time of the former five dynasties there have been places of worship of the Heen spirit in China. There have also been places of worship of the (Hoo) Foreign Heen, and the (Ho) Fire Heen. We find that this character Heen is compounded of the two characters 'she' (spiritual influence) and T'een (heaven), equivalent to the T'een (Heaven) spirit. This religion took rise in Judea, on the eastern border of the Roman empire."

Thus, then, may we safely conclude that at a very early date there were numerous synagogues in China and that there were an innumerable number of Jews resident not only at Kae-fung-foo but in various parts of the Chinese empire.

JULIUS J. PRICE.

TORONTO, ONTARIO.

[47] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, Tome XXIV, p. 73.
[48] *Ying-hwan che leo.*

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